



New York Field Office

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Federal Activities



Congressional District #23

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is a premier Federal fish and wildlife conservation agency. Our mission for over 60 years has been to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

Great Lakes Activities

Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Study The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is part of the Environmental Delivery Team (EDT) which includes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environment Canada, Transport Canada, and the Seaway organizations of each country. The EDT has been working to develop the environmental portion of the reconnaissance document. The Service has the lead for several topics. The goal of the reconnaissance study is to provide background information and identify those environmental resources that could be impacted by any maintenance or improvement to the existing Seaway facilities.

Wetland and Waterway Protection



Every year, our office reviews approximately 250 public notices prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Coast Guard. In these public notices, applicants propose to impact wetlands, streams, and other water bodies. The Service is effective at reducing the impacts of these projects on fish and wildlife resources and ensuring that mitigation is provided to achieve fish and wildlife benefits.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is actively working to reduce wetland impacts associated with the construction of the **Plattsburgh/Cumberland Head Connector Road**.

Energy Development

Hydroelectric Power The New York Field Office reviews non-Federal hydroelectric projects that are licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) under the Federal Power Act. Section 10(j) of the Federal Power Act allows the Service to make recommendations for measures to mitigate for project impacts to fish and wildlife resources and to provide protection and enhancement. These measures or an equivalent level of protection must be accepted by FERC. Section 18 gives the Service authority to prescribe fish passage; these prescriptions are mandatory and must be included in the license.

There are currently 172 active projects in New York, including 17 currently undergoing relicensing. The major issues of concern to the Service are protecting fish from being entrained into the turbines, upstream and downstream fish passage past the dams, base flows downstream of the projects, impoundment fluctuations, flows in dewatered reaches, wetland impacts, and public access.

In recent years, many project relicensings are being conducted with wide-scale public participation resulting in negotiated settlements for license conditions. This process allows interested stakeholders to negotiate a balanced package of conditions that include energy production, environmental protection and enhancement, economic benefits, and recreational amenities.

The Service played an active role in a major settlement that was reached on the **St. Lawrence/FDR Power Project** relicensing in 2003. The Service is involved in the Technical Advisory Council that is overseeing the implementation of the Habitat Improvement Projects portion of the settlement. We have also been working with the New York Power Authority to begin implementation of the \$24 million Fisheries Enhancement, Mitigation, and Research Fund.



The Service has been working with Erie Boulevard Hydropower (Erie) to implement agreements reached in the 1998 **Raquette River** settlement (licenses issued in 2002). Minimum flows have been established to nearly 10 miles of dewatered river and downstream fish movement facilities have been installed at most of the developments on the river.

Fish protection measures are being implemented at several sites. The Service helped Erie through the process of amending the license for the Middle Raquette River Project to allow the reconstruction of the Higley development in record time. The Service reached settlement with Erie and other parties on conditions for a new license for the Piercefield Project, which includes reduced impoundment fluctuations and fish protection and downstream movement facilities.

The Service was instrumental in achieving settlement of relicensing issues for the **Newton Falls Project** on the **Oswegatchie River**. The settlement includes minimum flows through bypassed reaches, reduced impoundment fluctuations to preserve fish and wildlife habitat, fish protection and downstream movement facilities, and conservation easements on valuable wetlands.

The Service has been working with the New York State Electric & Gas Corporation and other parties to develop conditions for relicensing the **Saranac River Project**. Conceptual agreement has been reached on most issues, and a settlement document is being finalized. The final agreement will include fish protection measures, minimum bypassed reach flows, minimum base flows, and recreational amenities.

The Service was instrumental in completion of a settlement with Erie and other parties for the **Oswego River and Oswego Falls** relicensings. The settlement was filed with the FERC earlier this year and includes upstream and downstream passage for American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*), fish protection, minimum bypassed reach and base flows, and reduced impoundment fluctuations. The Service is also working with the City of Oswego regarding the installation of an eel ladder at the High Dam Project.



Beebee Island Hydroelectric, Black River, Watertown

The NYFO has worked with various power companies on the **Beaver and Black Rivers** to ensure that hydroelectric development is compatible with other uses. Specifically, we have assisted in developing instream flow releases for bypassed river segments (to support fish and aquatic life), fish passage and protection facilities, portages, and recreational assess. The NYFO also serves as a member of advisory councils for both rivers.

Wind Energy The New York State Renewable Portfolio Standard and the interest in wind power is keeping our staff busy reviewing potential wind projects across the state. At least 15 new projects have been proposed where the wind resource is sufficient to generate electricity. A majority of the projects are proposed in western New York. Several projects are being reviewed closely by our staff related to endangered species and migratory bird issues. One project of interest is the Flat Rock project in Lewis County which is located close to habitat for the Federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*). Another project is sited between two bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) nests in Chautauqua County. The Service is working with both project developers as well as state and local officials to evaluate potential impacts to listed species.

We will soon be working with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to evaluate the cumulative effects of numerous wind projects within the state. Funding sources are being sought to convene a committee of stakeholders which will discuss wind energy development issues at the state level.

Federal Projects



Wind Turbine Farm, Town of Fenner, Madison County

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers coordinates with the Service on all proposed construction projects, such as for flood control, shoreline stabilization, or navigation. Our role is to ensure that construction is planned with a view toward conservation of fish and wildlife.

“Wildlife conservation shall receive equal consideration and be coordinated with other features of water-resource development programs through the effectual and harmonious planning, development, maintenance, and coordination of wildlife conservation and rehabilitation.”

1958 Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (P.L. 85-624)